

## BEYOND REDRESS/ MARK SANTOKI

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## 'WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?'

Bill Hoshijo and Kekuni Blaisdell Say Sovereignty Next Step

**F**or many of us who were involved in the movement for reparations, there has been this lingering question of what comes next." Bill Hoshijo was looking down the road as he spoke to a small election-night crowd at the final summer forum sponsored by the Sons & Daughters of the 442nd.

The sansei lawyer who co-founded and now serves as executive director/attorney of the public interest law firm, Na Loio No Na Kanaka (The Lawyers for the People of Hawaii), wondered out loud whether those who supported redress for Japanese Americans will commit themselves to broader struggles for justice.

"Our first responsibility, if we truly seek a just society must be to Hawaiians," said Hoshijo. "Our obligation to Hawaiians must be given the highest priority. The wait has been too long," stressed Hoshijo, calling for support for the Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

Why sovereignty? "Because we *kanaka maoli* (Native Hawaiians, lit.—real people) in our own homeland are on the bottom," said Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, who shared the podium with Hoshijo. Blaisdell, professor of medicine at UH-Manoa, is a member of the Hawaiian sovereignty coalition, Ka Pakaukau.



Kekuni Blaisdell: "Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) live on the beach. They're called 'beach people.' State goes in, throws them in jail. It's *their* lands."

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He said the U.S. annexed Hawaii in 1889, illegally, because a treaty is required by the U.S. Constitution. The newly established territorial government took guardianship of *kanaka maoli* lands. In 1921, the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act designated 200,000 acres for distribution to *kanaka maoli* as home-



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means that we accept no higher human authority over ourselves, our lands, ocean resources, other assets and our future than ourselves," he explained. "Every time any non-*kanaka maoli*, on our behalf, initiates anything without our input, our approval, we have to oppose."

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Valley." He said he realizes that "choosing between Daniel Inouye and us (*kanaka maoli*)" puts AJAs on the spot. "So it takes guts is what I'm saying. You're on the line."

Hoshijo noted that many Japanese Americans have made a commitment to supporting the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. He commended the Honolulu chapter of the Japanese American Citizen League for passing resolutions supporting sovereignty. Blaisdell recognized YWCA director June Shimokawa, labor activist Rachel Saiki and filmmaker Jeff Hirota for their pledge to support the sovereignty movement. He asked AJA teachers and writers to help educate others about sovereignty and to repudiate what he called the "misinformation" disseminated in mainstream newspapers and history books.

"This is no small challenge. But it's a challenge we must rise up to meet together," said Hoshijo, adding that the first step is a commitment to support the sovereignty movement.

Although he recognized the lasting contributions of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in empowering ethnic minorities in Hawaii, Hoshijo said the legacy of the 442nd is not entirely secure. "It's up to us in a sense. We the children of the 442nd are their legacy and

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He said the *kanaka maoli* community has the shortest life expectancy, the highest rates for heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, suicide, infant mortality, complications in pregnancy, rates of incarceration, high school dropouts and homelessness, and the lowest median family income.

"The need is there. The pain is there," said Blaisdell. "Surely something must be done." He said past experience has shown that "just tinkering" with the system will not work.

Over a century of injustice supports Ka Pakaukau's claim to sovereignty. In 1893 a coalition of Caucasian businessmen forced Queen Liliuokalani from the throne. "Most people call it the overthrow of the monarchy," said Blaisdell. While history books and newspapers consider the overthrow a positive devel-



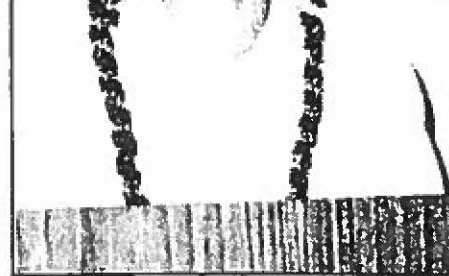
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Meanwhile, thousands of *kanaka maoli* died without ever receiving their homesteads. This prompted some *kanaka maoli* to occupy their lands without commission approval. "When eligible *kanaka maoli* occupy the lands, live on the lands, the state moves in, knocks down their homes and puts them in jail," says Blaisdell. "Kanaka *maoli* live on the beach. They're called 'beach people.' State goes in, throws them in jail. It's *their* lands."

While Blaisdell welcomes the support of the Japanese American community, he insists that non-Hawaiians must respect *kanaka maoli* sovereignty. "Sovereignty just



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Ka Pakaukau rejected U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye's sovereignty bill in August because he failed to consult with them. "He drafted (it) and handed it to us. Insulting. Humiliating," said Blaisdell. "I know he's a sacred person in this organization. Sorry, because you're going to run me out, but that is the truth."

Blaisdell said Japanese Americans must first make a commitment to support *kanaka maoli*. "Are you going to support us when we are evicted from our lands and put in jail? How about in Halawa Valley?" he asked, pointing to the case of Bishop Museum historian Barry Nakamura who was fired from his job for speaking out about the existence of ancient Hawaiian *heiau* in the path of the H-3 freeway.

Blaisdell charged that the Bishop Museum, Bishop Estate, state Department of Transportation and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs are "in collusion to put Daniel Inouye's military highway through Halawa

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"I hope that we do care about people, that we have a sense of justice, and that we have a sense of right and wrong beyond the bottom line of dollars and cents. This is our opportunity, a window of opportunity. If we let it pass, it will be gone forever. We can act, or we can live with the knowledge that we have done nothing."

"Justice is not something that you can win only for your own community," stressed Hoshijo. "If you only win justice for yourself, it's really meaningless. It's not truly justice."